DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 784 SP 037 948

AUTHOR Schultz, Dayvid
TITLE The Dynamics of Pedagogic Judgment in Teaching.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluative Thinking; Moral Values; *Student Behavior; *Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Responsibility; *Teacher Student Relationship; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Judgments

ABSTRACT

In the school culture, teachers are often caught between sanctioned instructional behavior and their own judgment; governed by legislated edicts, yet not freed by them to nurture their students. The relationship between pedagogic actions and morally acceptable outcomes, between responsibility to the self and to the students, the school, and the community is frequently perceived by reflective teachers to be in flux, confounding their daily judgments and classroom instruction. Through pedagogic judgments, teachers interpret and guide the enactment of their teaching, transforming theoretical constructs into relational understandings and technical concerns into morally expressive actions. Typically, students trust in their teachers' willingness to act in appropriate and equitable ways. Teachers must have an advocative attitude, with empathy for students' capacity to view the subject matter being taught. Inasmuch as students accept the teacher's offer of relationship as authentic, they are able to accept the teacher's presentation of the world, whether of history, math algorithms, or the moral implications of modeled adult classroom behavior. The effects of pedagogic judgment that arise from egocentric, or even casual behavior, may be the most destructive lessons taught. Attending to students requires an expansion to an inclusive, advocative self in the world of outside cause and effects. Inquiry will establish a compelling recognition of the moral in the beliefs, perceptions, reasoning, and actions that are associated with teacher judgment. Pedagogic judgment happens when the moral dimensions of teaching are recognized and the relationship between teacher and student is enabled. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 419 784

The Dynamics of Pedagogic Judgment in Teaching

Dayvid Schultz
AREA 1998 Annual Meeting

SP037948

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Schultz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The Dynamics of Pedagogic Judgment in Teaching

Good Afternoon.

Each day our individual actions influence the world that surrounds us. We might think of these effects as small swirls in a wide, slow river, one moment running counter to other currents, another moment mingling with the confluence of others, but always in a dynamic mix, minutely altering the flow of the whole. The physical sciences now teach us that one momentary singularity, a whorling action, that seemingly disappears into the vastness of the river has the recognizable potential to alter that river's eventual course, with far reaching physical and social consequences for those who live along its flood plain. So it is with our everyday teaching actions, and inactions: planning a math lesson, rearranging a learning center or reading to a student. Each of these simple actions swirl for a moment, then disappear into the flow of the lives around us. And each of these acts has the potential expressiveness to change our own lives and the lives of the people that surround us in ways both predictable and mysterious.

The culture of American middle class schools portray the teacher as governed by the policies and decisions of a civic authority. Teachers are systematically charged with implementing the community standards symbolized by a chosen curriculum, often with little regard to their awareness or skill as moral and pedagogic agents in enacting the symbolic or actual moral dimensions experienced in their classrooms. This simplified view of teaching, a "you need not worry" assertion that discourages a teacher's experiential accountability toward the moral expressiveness of their actions, diminishes their classroom

SP037948

expertise toward a mechanical, uncritical practice -- a presentation of the facts without the meaning. Yet in the culture of school, teachers are often caught in a web between sanctioned instructional behavior and their own judgment; governed by legislated edicts, yet not freed by them to nurture their students. The relationship between pedagogic actions and morally acceptable outcomes, between responsibility to the self, the students, the school institution and community is frequently perceived by reflective teachers to be in flux, confounding their daily judgments and classroom instruction.

In a recently completed dissertation I explored the moral expressiveness of teachers' pedagogic judgments within the complexity of their daily classroom life. In this study, pedagogic judgment is differentiated from other pedagogic evaluations by its emergence from a dynamic interplay of teachers' perceptions, knowledge and belief systems about classroom life and teaching practice. The correlation of terms such as trust, caring and worthwhileness with the teachers' own belief statements led to a portrait of judgment as a morally and pedagogically expressive activity embedded in and guiding daily teaching practices. My conclusions suggest that through pedagogic judgments these teachers interpret and guide the enactment of their teaching, transforming theoretical constructs into relational understandings, and technical concerns into morally expressive actions. A dynamic picture of pedagogic judgment emerged as the attentive and mindful qualities of the teachers' experience enable the full employment of their material and intellectual resources, oriented toward the refined and honest perception of goodness and ethical caring.

But is it possible to overstate the occurrence or importance of morally expressive pedagogic judgments in these classrooms? To characterize every classroom behavior as a judgment, a moral act, could diminish the possible effect of academic judgment and the role of teachers as instructors. Students are, after all, in school to learn to do math, read and prepare for a job. Even the most serious minded teacher could hardly be expected to interpret every moment as a moral message. Further, to typify the classroom experience as primarily a moral arena hints at a breach in our constitutional separation of church and state. Could not the state's role as educator be easily muddled, even subverted, by religion's role as moral arbiter?

In the extreme, these concerns do present genuine dangers to the many tasks of teaching. To immediately ponder the meaning of every action would itself be a harmful and impractical activity in a classroom full of say, seventh graders studying Asian history. Attention to the world *as it is*, after all, means just that. Further, the teachers' accounts in my dissertation do not lead to a characterization of teaching as either a melodramatic stage for moralizing or as a form of religious education (in sectarian terms). Pedagogic judgments can be well thought out or capricious, nurturing or destructive, but their prevalent expressiveness in the classroom experience of children, who are themselves submerged in the cultural limits of school, is a powerful factor in defining that experience.

To illustrate the balance of mindful expressiveness, let us consider the act of deciding to drink a glass of water. How might this simple, ordinary judgment be seen in light of my everyday life outside of school, or in school and in front of my students? In

my ordinary home life, my choice to drink a glass of water is based for the most part on my own needs. There may exist a vague sense that clean water is a renewable resource that should not be wasted, or even an awareness of the want for water in distant circumstances. Nonetheless, I satisfy my own desires with little more than a passing reflection that I should do something about these water issues, and then only after I am satiated. Indeed, on a hot summer day I consider my need as great as anyone's, and in my world at least, few would seriously argue. Taking that same drink in school, however, adds a dimension of complexity and doubt, as I must now contend with the consequences of institutional policies. In my school drinking water is not permitted in the classroom, a policy justified both as a sanitary measure and as a custodial concern. A trip to the drinking fountain or cafeteria is necessary if I am to conform, at least overtly, to the prerogative of the school as an institutional community to regulate the behavior of its members. In such a context, my awareness of a choice to conform or not begins to have more direct moral overtones. While there seems to be little at stake, at least materially, I do have to decide whether my self-interest in drinking water in my classroom takes precedence over our school policy. In the end I come to understand that to ignore this policy with a clear conscience I would have to rationalize that some policies are less important than others, and that my action would not have a disruptive effect on this community in which I expect to be treated fairly and with respect. Upon what moral ground might I stand?

The mundaneness of the situation, in light of the vast educative problems that face teachers today, at first makes this scenario seem absurd, even wasteful of time and intellectual resources, "Just drink the water and forget it." Yet, below this casual, reflexively self-interested view that this choice is irrelevant to the importance of my role as a teacher, stands the moral expressiveness of my action. To drink water covertly in my classroom, I must first accept that I am choosing to stand apart from a truthful membership in the institution's definition of community. I may therefore consider standing apart overtly as a more honest statement protesting an ill-advised, annoying policy. I may even decide that no one else really follows the policy so my breaking it shows solidarity with a subculture within the institution. But once again all this is rationalization. If I am to violate this policy I must bear the responsibility that other policies may be broken with the same rationalization.

Of course, I could choose to work to change the policy from within the institution. Let us say, however, for the sake of this argument that I accept the burden of illicit water drinking for now. Does my position change if I choose to drink my water in front of my students? What message do I send to students who not only may not drink water in the classroom, but who I require to ask for permission to use the hallway water fountain? Am I just showing inconsiderate, rude behavior? Or am I jeopardizing something more important? As a role model, what does breaking a well known school prohibition in front of my seventh graders mean? At the very least, it impugns my standing as a representative of the institution I claim to participate in by inviting my students to ask what other rules I

might be willing to break. Further, I can speculate with confidence that some of my students would feel doubts. The trust I have worked to earn as their advocate is now open to question. To choose to stand apart from them by drinking the water they are denied promotes, at least in my experience with seventh graders, the possibility that I will not stand with them in more serious situations.

In a sense, this role of advocate is a particular manifestation of the expressiveness of pedagogic judgment projected toward students. It points to one apparent difference between my judgments as teacher and in everyday life. As an adult, my membership in this institutional community is a voluntary association cast in the moral dimensions outlined above. For my students, however, membership in the Moore Elementary school community is often perceived to be ordained. In all four of the classrooms examined in my study, student trust in their teachers' willingness to act on appropriate and equitable ways. For these teachers to be as effective as they seem to be, accepting the authoritative position of teacher requires a necessarily advocative attitude that compensates for the *a priori* unequal meeting of adult-child/teacher-student in an institutional setting. Good intentions are not enough. Murdoch would add that true and loving attention to the real world of the student is possible only by transcending one's own interests (Murdoch, p. 101)[1]. To enact this advocative attitude requires empathy, not only toward the students' capacity to view the subject matter to be taught, but of the motivations brought to that

[1] Murdoch, I. (1970). The sovereignty of good. New York: Ark Paperbacks.

view. Inasmuch as students accept the teacher's offer of relationship as authentic, they are able to accept the teacher's presentation of the world, whether of history, math algorithms, or the moral implications of modeled adult classroom behavior.

This attention to the moral expressiveness of my teaching actions as a manifestation of relationship applies to unintended, as well as intended results. Returning to our water drinking, just because I cannot control the possible effects of water drinking in front of my students does not negate my responsibility for those effects. To the extent that I can choose to not drink, I avoid direct, externally expressive effects. Yet it seems to me that mindfulness toward effects performed wholly from the inner life points the way toward Murdoch's conception of the "good" as "an attention which is not just the planning of particular good actions but an attempt to look right away from self towards a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of new and quite undreamt-of virtue" (Murdoch, p. 101)[2].

I am not envisioning that teachers don monks' robes and chant their way toward a sublime state of selflessness, nor that a school should be a place of intellectual isolation. I am suggesting that the role of teacher is not lightly borne, and that the effects of pedagogic judgment that arise from egocentric, or even casual behavior may be the most destructive lessons taught. Attending to students, or to the classroom setting in general, requires not a loss of self, but an expansion to an inclusive, advocative self not only in the

[2] Ibid.

world of outside cause and effects, but toward an inner life's slow apprehension of the good *as it is presented*. This is the progressive moral imagination that engages us in our own history of perceptions, biases and beliefs. Inasmuch as we recognize and act from this expressiveness we make our history public and in some measure protect ourselves from the distortion of an isolated, self-interested ego, while safe-guarding our classrooms from demagogues.

My choice to drink the water has taken on another dimension. The very idea of "choice" has become problematic. Do I choose not to drink in support of my school's policy? Or because I want to show solidarity with my students? Or because it is rude behavior? Do I choose to do nothing because I am tired of all the rationalizations? In the end, I recognize that the act itself is selfish, but, and I believe more essential to my inner life, it is an act distant to my beliefs about self as teacher, advocate and caregiver. Not to drink is not so much a judgmental leap as one more affirming step of the teacher I am becoming, one more step toward wisdom in practice. To enact pedagogic judgments is to help bring into being a certain kind of person, a certain kind of teacher.

What of other situations? If the expressiveness of my drink of water can be recognized, how about that messy desk, the extra help my seventh grader, Tanya, needs, or those tests I still have not graded? Certainly I begin to see that each situation has its own expressive nature; a messy desk could infer that my teaching is sloppy, or that I am spontaneous and eclectic. Those ungraded tests could infer that my position as teacher allows me to dictate at my whims the terms of student evaluations. Or that I fail to

recognize the real effort my students have put in (and their impatience for getting the tests back); or conversely that I would like to take the time to thoughtfully critique each student's writing, responding in kind with my own prose evaluation. Each approach to the moral dimensions of pedagogic judgment requires attention and mindfulness, but the qualities of these judgments are the qualities of ourselves.

Must teachers view their work as a moral activity? I believe that inquiry will established a compelling recognition of the moral in the beliefs, perceptions, reasoning and actions we have associated with a teacher's judgment. Pedagogic judgment happens when the moral dimensions of teaching are recognized and the relationship between teacher and student is enabled. Pedagogic judgments carry the heaviest weight of all -- the weight of acting on behalf of the other, of taking the responsibility for the other onto yourself, of guiding students to recognize purpose. In this sense no description of teachers' work can be complete without accounting for, in a central position, the moral expressiveness of judgments. This inquiry challenges us to understand all of life's endeavors as moral activity, especially as we affect, both directly and indirectly, the lives of the children around us. Thank you.

March 28, 1998

Additional Bibliography

Buchmann, M. (1989). The Careful Vision: How Practical Is Contemplation in Teaching?. American Journal of Education, 98, 35 - 61.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dewey, J. (1932). Theory of the moral life (p. 131). New York: Collier Books.

Dewey, J. (1933). How we think. Boston: D.C. Heath.

Eisner, E. (1991). The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice (pp. 50-60). New York: Macmillan Publishing.

Elbaz, F. (1983). The teacher's "practical knowledge": Report of a case study. Curriculum Inquiry, 11(1), 43-71.

Emerson, R. W. (1988). "Self-reliance", Essays and lectures p. 166. New York: Library of America.

Gadamer, H.G. (1992). Truth and method. (J. Weinsleimer, D. Marshall, Trans., 2nd ed.) New York: Crossroads Publishing.

Goodman, J. (1988). Constructing a practical philosophy of teaching: A study of preservice teachers' professional perspectives. Teaching & Teacher Education, 4, 121-137.

Hansen, David T. (1995). The call to teach. New York: Teachers College.

Ihde, D. (1977). Experimental Phenomenology: An introduction. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Jackson, Philip W., Boostrom, Robert E., and Hansen, David T. (1993). The Moral Life of Schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Janesick, V. (1982). Of snakes and circles: Making sense of classroom group processes through a case study. Curriculum Inquiry, 12(2), 161-189.

Lampert, M. (1985). How do teachers mange to teach: Perspectives on problems in practice. Harvard Educational Review, 55(2), 178-94.

MacIntyre, A. (1984). After virtue (2nd. ed.). Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press.

Murdoch, I. (1970) The sovereignty of good. New York: Ark Paperbacks.

Nespor, Jan (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19: 4, 317-328.

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry. University of New York Press.

Schubert, W., & Ayers, W. (1992). Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience. White Plains, NY.: Longman Publishing.

Schultz, D. (1993). Seeing the jabberwocky. Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Education Studies Association, Chicago.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. London, Ontario: State University of New York, @ The University of Western Ontario.

Van Manen, M. (1991). The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness. Albany: State University of New York.

Willis, G., Schubert, W. (Eds.) (1991). Reflections from the heart of educational inquiry: Understanding currirulum and teaching through the arts. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

For additional copies of this paper, contact:

Dayvid Schultz
2425 N. Albany Ave
Chicago, IL 60647
(773) 432-2973
75123.1022@compuserve.com

- - - - - - - - - -